

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Child and Family Services Agency



Administrative Issuance: CFSA-08-15

TO: CFSA All Staff

FROM: Dr. Roque Gerald, Interim Director

DATE: October 22, 2008

RE: Protocol for Establishing the Goal of Alternative Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA)

This administrative issuance provides standards and procedures for CFSA and its case management partners to make individualized determinations to establish Alternative Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA) as the permanency goal for a youth.

The mission of the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) is to promote the safety, permanence, and well-being of children and families in the District of Columbia. We are committed to making all efforts to promote children's safety while they remain in the custody of their parent(s) or caretakers. When CFSA determines that a child is at imminent risk of harm, the child may be moved from their home to the protective custody of CFSA. Remaining in protective custody or in the custody of the state¹ is not a primary, long-term option for children and youth. It is the goal of CFSA to ensure that each child and youth in CFSA custody finds a permanent connection with at least one committed adult who is safe, stable and able to provide the following components of a supportive relationship:

1. Love
2. Unconditional commitment
3. Lifelong support, guidance, and supervision to the youth as the youth transitions from foster care to self-sufficiency
4. The opportunity to maintain contacts with important persons, including brothers and sisters

Whenever possible, lifelong connections would occur in the context of reunification, a legal adoption, guardianship or legal custody.

Rationale

Federal regulations consider APPLA to be viable as a permanency option only after "the State agency has documented to the State court a compelling reason for determining that it would not be in the best interests of the child to return home, be referred for termination of parental rights, or be placed for adoption, with a fit and willing relative, or with a legal guardian."² The phrase "another planned

¹ 42 U.S.C. 675(5)(C)

² 42 U.S.C. 675(5)(C).

permanent living arrangement” was coined by Congress during the writing of the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997, Public Law 105-89 (ASFA) as a result of concern for children languishing indefinitely in the foster care system. “Long-term foster care” was eliminated as a permanency option with the intent that children would exit from foster care with a permanent family.

Primary Permanency Options

The following are primary options for “Safe Case Closure” as identified by CFSA's Practice Model:³

Reunification

The CFSA Practice Model affirms the immeasurable importance and significance of a youth's attachment to parents and family. It is CFSA's commitment to protect and preserve this attachment by providing every possible resource for youth and their families to maintain an optimally healthy, nurturing family bond. The goal of reunification is the first, primary and most preferred permanency option for children under the care of CFSA.

Guardianship

CFSA's Practice Model fully supports and actively seeks involvement of relatives to achieve permanency for children and youth. In the event that reunification has been eliminated as a viable permanency option, permanence can be achieved through permanent guardianship with kin. Research indicates that this option positively influences school performance, behavior, mental health, and/or later adult functioning.⁴

Adoption

Non-kin adoption involves recruitment of an adoptive/custodial family that is not related to the youth. Youth may also be adopted by relatives or kin. CFSA's current pre- and post-adoption services are carefully tailored to encourage and sustain the adoption process, both for relatives and non-relatives.

Legal Custody

Legal custody awards legal responsibility for the child or youth, including the right to make decisions regarding where and with whom the child shall live; the right and duty to protect, train, and discipline the child; and the responsibility to provide the child with food, shelter, education, and ordinary medical care.⁵

Considerations for Determination of APPLA as a Non-Preferred Permanency Option

It is the policy of the Child and Family Services Agency to prepare for permanence through a comprehensive case planning and teaming approach that includes the youth and family in a participatory process. Only after careful and conservative advisement, and only after the four priority permanency goals mentioned above have been eliminated during this process, shall consideration be given as to whether a youth is to be eligible for the goal of APPLA. Further, the following requirements must be fulfilled prior to accepting the goal of APPLA for any youth:

1. The youth is 16 years of age or older.
2. The youth's case record fully documents facts, evidence, and circumstances surrounding the decision to consider APPLA, including evidence that the four priority permanency goals have been

³ See Quality Service Review Protocol (February 2008, pages 48-49) used to evaluate the implementation of CFSA's Practice Model, page (insert #).

⁴ Kang, Hyun-ah (2003). Well-Being Outcomes of Children in Kinship Care Literature Review. *Children and Family Resource Center, School of Social Work, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*.

⁵ D.C. Code §16-2301(21)

exhausted, evidence of youth and family involvement in the decision-making process, and evidence of supervisory input and approval.

3. A concurrent permanency plan has been thoughtfully developed for all youth in care including youth with extraordinary needs who may need to remain indefinitely in institutional care. The concurrent permanency plan must include at least one, preferably two adult parental figures, who willingly commit to involvement with the youth beyond his or her time in foster care.
4. The youth's skills and talents have been assessed, and he/she has been or will be enrolled in an individualized program designed to develop independent living skills, including those required to secure an appropriate income and suitable housing.
5. Youth must have been involved in at least one "Listening to Youth and Families as Experts" (LYFE) Conference, assembled for the purpose of exploring permanency options. LYFE Conferences should be requested by the CFSA or private agency social worker in sufficient time to allow for coordination of the meeting, at least 3-4 weeks in advance. All requests must be submitted via email to cfsa.ftmu@dc.gov for assignment to a LYFE Conference coordinator. In addition to the youth's social worker, it is recommended that the social worker's supervisor also be in attendance.
6. If all of the above conditions have been met and satisfied, the assigned Administrator must submit a Request for APPLA Goal Approval form to the **Agency's Director or designee** for signature. Private Agency workers shall submit the request to their respective agency's Executive Director for approval. The approved form shall be forwarded by the private agency's worker to the CFSA monitor for review and then to the CFSA Director for final approval. All of the above-mentioned documentation must be copied and attached to the form. The signed form shall be copied and filed with the case plan. The original will be submitted by the case worker to the Court.

The APPLA goal shall be constantly examined and revisited at all relevant team meetings and reviews. This goal should not be considered fixed or immutable.

If you have any questions regarding this administrative issuance, please contact the Deputy Director for Program Operations.